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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 22nd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. SENGWE (Zimbabwe)

later: Mr. STEIN (Germany)
(Vice-Chairman)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 114: PROGRAMME PLANNING (continued)

Proposed medium-term plan for the period 1998-2000 (A/51/6 (fascicles) and A/51/16 (Part II))

General debate (continued)

Programme 14. Economic and social development in Africa

1. Mr. KELLY, speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the European Union welcomed the process of internal reform which was under way in most of the regional economic commissions, and urged those regional commissions which had not yet initiated such reviews to do so with a view to ensuring optimum utilization of resources and greater effectiveness and responsiveness. The regional commissions should focus their reform efforts in those areas in which they enjoyed a comparative advantage, such as regional policy issues, normative and analytical questions and dissemination activities, while avoiding duplication of work which could be performed more effectively by other international organizations. Operational activities should be carried out by the appropriate machinery in the United Nations system.

2. The results of the reform efforts to be undertaken should be taken into account in the programmes which the General Assembly approved for the regional commissions. His delegation expected that most of the reforms would already have been carried out by the time the various regional commissions reported to the Economic and Social Council on that matter at its substantive session in April 1997. On the other hand, follow-up and implementation of the outcomes of the various major United Nations conferences had been given low or no priority in the programmes of the regional commissions. The European Union believed that it was necessary to rectify that situation.

3. The European Union welcomed the streamlining process initiated in the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), and hoped that the process would include a critical examination of the duration and frequency of meetings, including those of the Commission itself. Regarding paragraph 14.3 of document A/51/6 (Prog. 14), the European Union noted with satisfaction the intention to make the role of women a cross-cutting issue in all ECA programme activities.

4. Mr. Stein (Germany), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

5. Mr. ZENNA (Ethiopia) said that his delegation was pleased to acknowledge the renewal exercise undertaken by ECA in 1995 with a view to turning itself into a more effective and flexible organization. ECA's new strategy, aimed at facilitating economic and social policy analysis, ensuring food security and sustainable development, strengthening development management, harnessing information for development and promoting regional cooperation and integration for development, had been discussed and approved by the Conference of Ministers responsible for economic and social development held in Addis Ababa from 30 April to 8 May 1996. The Conference had requested that ECA should be given

the opportunity to deliver improved services to Member States and welcomed the launching of the United Nations system Special Initiative on Africa, which would be spearheaded by ECA in various priority areas. ECA's role in implementing the New Agenda for the Development of Africa and the need to strengthen that agenda had also been emphasized in the final document of the mid-term review. All of those factors indicated the confidence which African Governments had in the Commission's work. The commitments and agreements which had been adopted at recent United Nations conferences had also placed new responsibilities on the regional commissions. His delegation therefore supported the themes highlighted in the medium-term plan and rejected any attempt to belittle the role of the regional commissions in the development activities of the United Nations.

6. Ms. CABRERA (Mexico) endorsed the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) with respect to programme 14, as outlined in document A/51/16 (Part II).

7. Mr. AMARI (Tunisia) welcomed the reform process undertaken by ECA and endorsed the conclusions of CPC.

8. Ms. INCERA (Costa Rica), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the regional commissions had the important role of incorporating the regional dimension into the programmes and activities of the United Nations, and were able to respond efficiently and effectively to the specific assistance needs of each region. In addition, the commitments and agreements approved at recent United Nations conferences had placed greater responsibilities on the regional commissions. The Group of 77 and China therefore rejected any proposal to transfer the functions of the regional commissions to other institutions.

9. Regarding programme 14, ECA was, in addition to its traditional role, presiding over the Inter-Agency Task Force on the implementation of the United Nations programme of action for the economic recovery and development of Africa and its responsibility at regional level for the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa. Subprogramme 14.4 should clearly include activities designed to facilitate the implementation of the New Agenda and list the outcomes of the activities which were to be undertaken. Subprogramme 14.5 should also include activities designed to implement the urgent measures and the recommendations agreed upon in the mid-term review of the New Agenda related to programmes for promoting regional and subregional cooperation and integration, particularly in the areas of transport, communications, diversification of commodities and institutional development.

10. Mr. MOKTEFI (Algeria) said that his Government attached particular importance to the implementation of programme 14 and endorsed the work being done by ECA, which was very important for the development of Africa. The internal reforms undertaken by ECA had demonstrated its capacity for renewal and its viability. Its role should not be belittled. In that connection, his delegation supported the conclusions and recommendations of CPC.

11. Mr. FATTAH (Egypt) endorsed the comments made by the delegation of Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. His delegation had taken an active part in the deliberations of CPC on programme 14, which it fully supported in view of its importance for Africa.

12. The CHAIRMAN said he took it that the Committee had concluded its general debate on programme 14.

13. It was so decided.

Programme 15. Economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific

14. Mr. KELLY (Ireland), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that subprogrammes 15.1 (Regional economic cooperation: trade and investment) and 15.3 (Regional economic cooperation: industry and technology) to a certain extent duplicated the work performed by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The European Union therefore questioned whether there was a need for the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) to carry out further work on technology transfer.

15. Ms. CABRERA (Mexico) endorsed the conclusions and recommendations of CPC regarding programme 15.

16. Ms. INCERA (Costa Rica), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that it would be advisable to better reflect the relevant legislative mandates, including those of the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), and to take account of the reorientation of activities as a result of the restructuring of ESCAP. Subprogrammes 15.1 (Regional economic cooperation: trade and development), 15.2 (Regional economic cooperation: research and policy analysis), and 15.3 (Regional economic cooperation: industry and technology) should give maximum priority to South-South cooperation, including the triangular modality of cooperation. The following sentence should therefore be added to paragraph 15.4: "It will emphasize South-South cooperation, including the triangular modality of cooperation, to guide specific activities in achieving the objectives of the various subprogrammes". In paragraph 15.6, the words "and among the developing countries with support from developed countries, that is, tripartite cooperation" should be replaced with the formulation "and among the developing countries with appropriate support from developed countries as well as from United Nations agencies, funds and programmes".

17. Access to environmentally sound technologies and provision of an environmentally sound infrastructure for human settlements was a key aspect of strengthening national capacity with a view to achieving sustainable and environmentally sound development. Therefore, subprogramme 15.4 (Environment and sustainable development) should contain an explicit reference to the pertinent recommendations of Agenda 21 and also take account of the outcome of Habitat II. In paragraph 15.11, a new subparagraph 4 (d) should be added which would read: "To work with Governments and regional and international associations of local authorities, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, academic institutions and other regional or subregional groupings to develop regional human settlements plans of action, addressing priority issues specific to Asia and the Pacific region". In the same paragraph, a new subparagraph (g) should be added which would read: "To promote opportunities that will enable developing countries to acquire environmentally friendly or sound technology to contribute to the strengthening of national capacities in achieving sustainable development".

18. Ms. ARAGON (Philippines) endorsed the comments made by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The Philippines attached great importance to programme 15, in particular subprogrammes 15.1 and 15.3, and therefore it did not share the view expressed in CPC that subprogramme 15.3 should be eliminated.

19. Ms. SANTIPITAKS (Thailand) said that Thailand attached great importance to programme 15 and supported the work of ESCAP in that sphere.

20. Mr. ATIYANTO (Indonesia) supported the statement of the representative of the Philippines and pointed out that despite its current economic dynamism, Asia contained almost three-quarters of the world's poor.

21. The CHAIRMAN said he took it that the Committee had thus concluded its discussion of programme 15.

22. It was so decided.

Programme 16. Economic development in Europe

23. Mr. KELLY (Ireland), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the European Union had been actively involved in the reform process currently under way in the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and had strongly supported it. In its view, ECE should focus its activities in those areas where it had demonstrated its experience, competence and excellence. At the same time, it hoped that ECE would be able to respond flexibly to the new circumstances, wishes and needs of its member States. Clearly, an examination of the reforms to be agreed on as a result of the negotiations being held in Geneva would be needed before the programme of work of the Regional Commission could be approved.

24. Ms. CABRERA (Mexico) and Mr. LOZINSKY (Russian Federation) said that their respective countries supported the conclusions and recommendations of CPC with respect to programme 16.

25. The CHAIRMAN said he took it that the Committee had thus concluded its discussion of programme 16.

26. It was so decided.

Programme 17. Economic and social development in Latin America and the Caribbean

27. Ms. INCERA (Costa Rica), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that programme 17 would appear to have been drafted in accordance with the relevant mandates. However, the Group of 77 wished to stress that the restructuring of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) was the direct responsibility of its member States; thus, the medium-term plan should reflect the priorities contained in document LC/G.1942.

28. Mr. GREIVER (Uruguay) reaffirmed the importance of ECLAC because of the support and assistance it provided to States in the region. The effectiveness,

maintenance and strengthening of the Commission took priority among the measures intended to raise the standard of living and economic activity of the countries of the region. Uruguay believed that the objective of programme 17 should be not just the comprehensive analysis of development processes, as noted in paragraph 17.1, but also cooperation with Member States in that process, in such specific areas as trade flows, foreign investment, technology, the problem of instability, diversification of products and markets, specialization and restructuring of production and increasing international competitiveness, agreements on regional and subregional integration, compatibility of economic, fiscal, monetary and exchange policies, the topic of the insufficient savings in the region, rising unemployment and poverty, educational and social service reform, infrastructure and decentralization, the impact of and sacrifices required by the reforms and a substantial restructuring of the State and management. The objective of programme 33 of the medium-term plan for 1992-1997 had been the achievement of sustained economic growth in conditions of equity in the Latin American and Caribbean region, in order to provide the social cohesion and political stability that constituted the political foundation for all development. However, that objective had not yet been reached, and it was regrettable that programme 17 of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 did not include the problems of all the countries of the region. Uruguay was ready to participate actively in seeking a consensus solution with respect to the recommendations on programme 17.

29. Ms. SEALY MONTEITH (Jamaica), supported by Ms. CABRERA (Mexico), Ms. BUERGO RODRIGUEZ (Cuba), Mr. VARELA (Chile), Mr. FAGUNDES DO NASCIMENTO (Brazil), Mr. FATTAH (Egypt), Mr. PALIZ (Ecuador) and Ms. INCERA (Costa Rica), endorsed the conclusions and recommendations of CPC in respect of programme 17 and stressed the importance of the work of ECLAC. In particular, Jamaica believed that the Commission should achieve a more satisfactory balance between its operational and analytical activities, placing greater emphasis on the former. Jamaica welcomed the inclusion of subprogramme 17.11, and urged increased cooperation among international, regional and subregional institutions whose work was related to the mandate of ECLAC, especially follow-up activities to the global conferences.

30. Ms. FIGUERA (Venezuela) said that her delegation supported the work of ECLAC and the conclusions and recommendations of CPC on programme 17. It particularly wished to associate itself with the view expressed by Uruguay with regard to paragraph 17.1 of programme 17.

31. The CHAIRMAN said he took it that the Committee had thus concluded its discussion of programme 17.

32. It was so decided.

Programme 18. Economic and social development in Western Asia

33. Ms. INCERA (Costa Rica), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that programme 18 reflected the relevant mandates of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). The process of restructuring ESCWA, which had already required considerable effort, was the direct responsibility of its member States.

34. Mr. SULAIMAN (Syrian Arab Republic) said that, because of the changing international situation, the activities of ESCWA had taken on historic importance. In that context, his delegation reaffirmed the need for the Commission's member States to support its activities, particularly in the areas of population, development, energy and economic revitalization. It also recalled the May 1996 meeting of Ministers of the Environment and the proposal to hold a special session of the General Assembly in 1997 devoted to an examination and evaluation of Agenda 21.

35. Ms. CABRERA (Mexico) said that her delegation supported the conclusions and recommendations on programme 18 and stressed the importance of the work of ESCWA to the region.

36. Mr. FATTAH (Egypt) said that his delegation associated itself with the statements made by Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by the Syrian Arab Republic and Mexico. Egypt had taken part in the discussions on programme 18 in CPC, and would cooperate with other delegations in the informal consultations on that subject.

37. The CHAIRMAN said he took it that the Committee had thus concluded its discussion of programme 18.

38. It was so decided.

Programme 12. Crime prevention and criminal justice

39. Ms. CABRERA (Mexico) said that her delegation supported the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination on programme 12.

40. Mr. KELLY (Ireland), speaking on behalf of the European Union, requested that discussion of that item should remain open, as the European Union intended to express its views on programmes 12 and 13 at a later meeting.

41. Ms. BUERGO RODRIGUEZ (Cuba) said that her delegation would prefer to comment on programme 12 once it had received the relevant replies from the Third Committee.

Programme 13. International drug control

42. Ms. CABRERA (Mexico) reiterated the importance of programme 13 and supported the conclusions and recommendations of CPC contained in paragraph 148 of its report (A/51/16 (Part II)).

43. Ms. BUERGO RODRIGUEZ (Cuba) said that her delegation attached great importance to the examination of programme 13; its comments relating to programme 12 also applied to that programme.

44. Ms. INCERA (Costa Rica) said that programmes 12 and 13 were of paramount importance; therefore, her delegation supported all the recommendations and conclusions of CPC.

45. Mr. ODAGA JALOMAYO (Uganda) said that his delegation also considered programmes 12 and 13, which were interrelated, to be very important. Programme 13 could be better implemented if the regional institutions concerned with criminal matters included in programme 12 were strengthened. In that context, his delegation strongly supported both programmes and the conclusions of CPC.

The meeting rose at 4.15 p.m.